



WALPOLE
MASSACHUSETTS

Town Administrator's

2021 Annual Budget Message

James A. Johnson – Town Administrator
February 2, 2021



Introduction

It is once again my honor to present the Town Administrator's Budget Message for the Fiscal Year 2022. Before I begin to discuss Fiscal Year 2022 I would be remiss if I did not mention and reflect on the challenges that all of us faced in 2020.

While non-partisanship, integrity, respect and honesty have always been the hallmarks of most individuals involved in local government, never before has it been more important for local officials to embrace these concepts than through this global pandemic and during these politically precarious times. Now more than ever, local officials have to build confidence and trust among the residents and businesses of our community, maintain the highest ethical and professional standards, and preserve critical and essential municipal services while struggling with financial constraints, health and safety concerns, and economic uncertainties.

The unprecedented public health crisis caused by Covid-19, in addition to the many other challenges that every resident faces, has required Town officials to develop new strategies and policies while navigating through uncharted territory. Walpole will continue to adjust, adapt and when necessary pivot as we navigate through 2021.

Despite all of the challenges faced over the past year we continue to successfully manage our town. The budget that is being presented today may not be as broad-reaching as previous budgets but the Fiscal Year 2022 budget continues to allow the Town to provide a wide range of services that residents of Walpole count on and expect.

The Select Board, Finance Committee, School Committee and other Town officials will have extensive public discussion regarding the Fiscal Year 2022 budget throughout the remaining winter and spring months. I am certain that adjustments will be made. The message I offer you today is one of assurance that Walpole will get through the pandemic and continue to serve as a bedrock of support for its residents and businesses.

Ongoing Growth in Walpole

Despite all of the issues associated with 2020, Walpole continues to experience ongoing growth. Prior to providing an overview of the revenue and expenditures I would like to highlight some of the projects on going in Walpole.

Municipal Projects

The South Walpole Community Athletic Complex located on Route 1A in South Walpole is nearing completion. I am pleased to report that youth leagues already started using



the synthetic turf fields this past December and I expect much more continued use once the spring season gets underway. The new 18-acre complex includes two multi-use synthetic turf fields, two multi-use natural grass fields, a baseball diamond, a softball diamond, walking paths, and more than 250 parking spaces. This achievement marks the culmination of many years of planning and community discussions going back to the 2008 Fields Master Plan, and I would like to extend my gratitude to the Select Board for their leadership, to Town Meeting for funding this project, to the Department of Public Works and Recreation Department for making this vision a reality, and to the countless coaches, volunteers, and fundraisers over the years who helped to get this project over the finish line. Walpole has a long tradition of athletic excellence that stretches from youth sports to the High School, and this new complex will be a point of pride for the entire community for decades to come.

South Walpole Community Athletic Complex





Toward the latter half of 2020 the Select Board worked hard to ensure that Walpole was accepted into the Commonwealth's Green Communities initiative. This program creates a grant and loan program for communities that meet criteria involving zoning and permitting of energy facilities, benchmarking energy use and implementing plans for reducing energy use, fuel efficient vehicles, and minimizing life-cycle energy costs for new construction.

The acceptance into the Green Communities initiative is going to enable the Town to meet State's climate requirements and allow the Town to pursue grant funding for years to come. This office is close to finalizing an agreement with the Towns of Norwood and Sharon that will allow Walpole to partner with these communities and have one person responsible for pursuing grant opportunities and ensuring that each community accurately reports to the State.

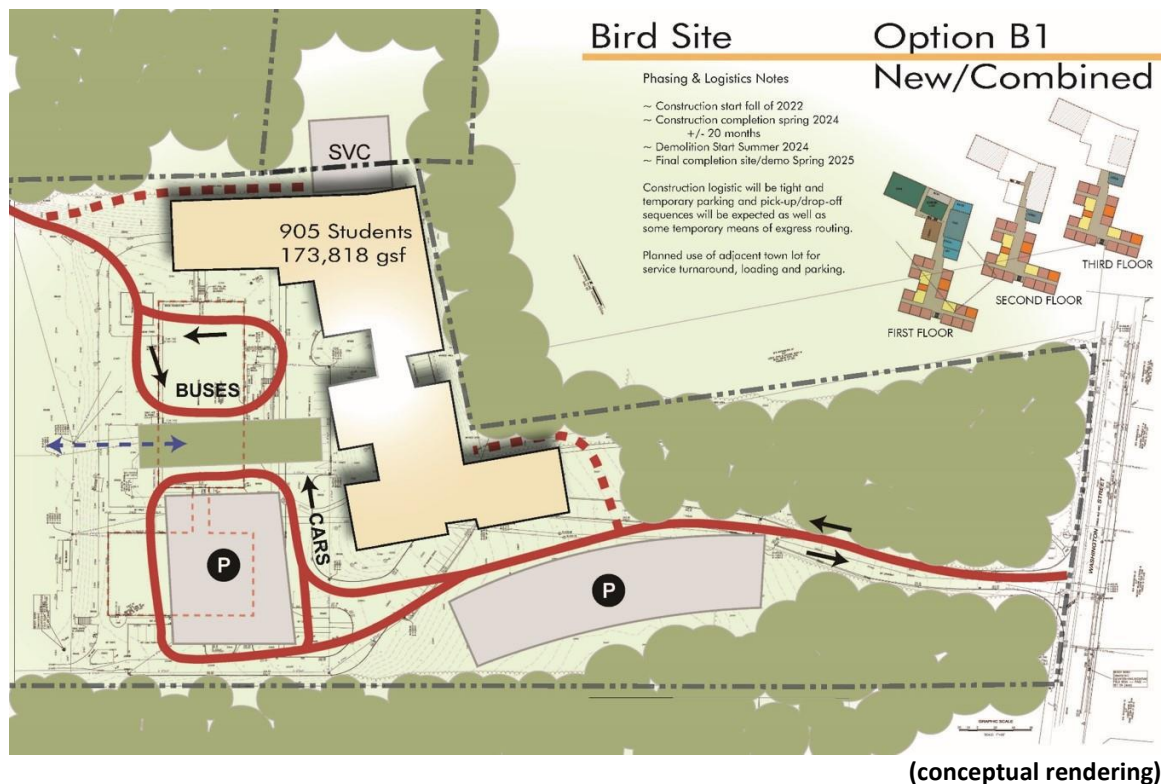
The Town continues to work with the Massachusetts School Building Authority to advance Walpole's application for a Middle School project. Although 2020 presented its initial challenges for this project, I am pleased to report that the Town appointed Compass Project Management, Inc. to be the Owner's Project Management firm and Tappé Architects to serve as the project architect. In addition to coming on board for the Middle School project, Compass Project Management served as Walpole's Project Manager for the Police Station, Fire Station, and Council on Aging building projects, and was instrumental in ensuring that all three projects were completed on-time and under-budget.

The Middle School project is presently in the Feasibility Phase of the project, which requires the District to document its educational program, generate an initial space summary, develop and evaluate alternatives, and recommend a preferred solution to the MSBA Board of Directors for their consideration. Just last week, the Walpole School Building Committee reached the important milestone of selecting a new combined-Middle School option at the present Bird Middle School site (conceptual rendering below) as the preferred option for grades 6-8. With this decision having been made, the project team can finish completing the Preferred Schematic Report, which is required before the Town can be invited to proceed with schematic design. To finance this project, the School Committee will be providing details to the community later this year of the debt exclusion that they will be organizing.

I would like to recognize and thank the members of the School Building Committee, who continue to ensure that the Town keeps the project on schedule and is achieving the milestones provided by the MSBA, despite the challenges presented by COVID-19. I



would urge residents to visit the Walpole Public schools building website for the most up to date information. (<https://sites.google.com/walpole.k12.ma.us/school-building-project/home>)



Last year the Town began the process of updating its Master Plan. As with many things in 2020 we were forced to put this on the back burner to address more pressing issues at the onset of the pandemic. I am pleased to report that after delaying the procurement process for some time the Town developed a request for proposals to assist with the development of updating the Master Plan. The Town recently received multiple proposals and is set to consider and award a contract to a firm in the near future.

This Master Plan Update, once completed, will allow the Town to implement strategies for Town Departments and regulatory boards and seek to investigate and establish goals and strategies for Land Use and Zoning, Housing, Economic Development, Cultural and Historic Resources, Open Space and Recreation, Public Services, Transportation, Sustainability, Climate Change, and Public Health.



I am confident that an updated Master Plan will enable the Town to establish a blueprint of goals, and action steps to tactically guide the Town's growth over the next 20 years and eventually lead to updating the Town's Zoning Bylaws.

To assist with this, I am pleased to report that the Town has recently entered into a Community Compact with the state, as completing a Master Plan has been identified as one of their priorities for sustainable development and land protection.

Economic Development

One aspect of the community hit the hardest during the pandemic has been Walpole's small businesses. Eleven months later, the private sector continues to bend and adapt to changing standards in response to fluctuations in active COVID-cases, with the 25% capacity limit still in effect and the 9:30PM curfew ending just last week.

Right from the onset of the pandemic, Town departments and the community at-large stepped up to show its support for Walpole's small businesses. The Building Department for instance was well-positioned to accept applications for building permits online and inspections started to take place remotely so construction could continue as seamlessly as possible.

The Community Development Department additionally spearheaded a number of initiatives such as "Walpole Provisions," which detailed which businesses were open and ready to provide takeout, and the #eatINwalpole campaign which centered on spreading awareness of Walpole's restaurants.

In its capacity as the licensing board, the Select Board voted to reduce 2021 on-premises liquor renewals by 25% to further assist restaurants weather through the pandemic. In a regional effort to support small businesses, microbusiness grants also became available for businesses with 5 or fewer employees to help cover business costs, rent, staffing, and utilities.

Additionally, in one of the Town's swiftest actions taken to support local businesses, I am pleased to report that this past spring the Town brought every resource to bear to make outdoor dining in Walpole a reality. All departments collectively worked to streamline the approval process for outdoor dining, the Select Board agreed to waive fees and fast-track lease agreements, and the Department of Public Works secured the sidewalks and prepared the downtown to accommodate dining patrons and pedestrians. In this light, this past year has demonstrated that outdoor dining in Walpole can be done safely and responsibly, and is something that patrons overall are interested in. Taking this a step further, this past fall Town Meeting voted to enable



outdoor dining and entertainment via the Limited Site Plan review going forward, an important step to making the approval process more efficient and responsive for Town Departments and applicants alike.

These are just a few examples of the measures that the Town of Walpole has made to support its business community. The Town remains committed to ensuring that the local economy remains at the center of the recovery.

Private Development Projects

Some of the major Commercial and residential projects that are nearing completion, ongoing or are expected to begin soon include:

- Liberty Village/Foundry Project at intersection of East and Elm Streets
 - 152 market rate apartment units with 15k sq. feet of commercial/retail space.
 - 52 one-bedroom units and 100 two-bedroom units
 - Occupancy is underway with approximately 22% of the units occupied.
- Union and West at 95 West Street
 - 192 market rate apartment units with approximately 5,000 sq. feet of commercial/retail space on the ground floor.
 - 20 studio units, 83 one-bedroom units, 79 two-bedroom units and 10 three-bedroom units.
 - Occupancy is underway with approximately 40% of the units occupied.
- Siemens Expansion Project at the Coney Street facility
 - Siemens \$300 million expansion is about 99% complete.
 - Over 300 jobs have been created to date.
- Pulte at the former Walpole Woodworkers site
 - 186 1 & 2 bedroom AQRV condos
 - Building 1 is 100% complete, with 80% of units occupied.
 - Construction of Building 2 continues.
 - Construction on Buildings 3 & 4 has not started yet.
- Age Qualified Village (55+) at Renmar Avenue/West Street
 - 105 proposed units approved by the Planning Board
 - Site development is underway.
 - Building permits have yet to be pulled to date.



- La Quinta Hotel located at the intersection of Route 1 and Route 27
 - Zoning board approved special permit
 - Limited site plan completed
 - Building Permits expected to be filed in mid-2021.
- Lincoln Road Subdivision
 - “Lincoln Estates” 24 lot subdivision applied for
 - Project set to be considered by the Planning Board.
- Burns Ave Comprehensive Permit
 - Developer increased proposed units from 32 to 40.
 - ZBA recently closed the hearing once again.
- Summer St. Comprehensive Permit
 - 300 Unit 1, 2 and 3 bedroom 40B project proposed
 - ZBA is currently considering application.
- Dupee St. Comprehensive Permit
 - 12 Unit 40B project proposed on a 53,000 square foot parcel
 - Project is currently being considered by the ZBA.
- Moosehill Road Comprehensive Permit
 - 8 Unit 40B project proposed on a 50,000 square foot parcel
 - Project is currently before the ZBA for consideration.
- Self-Storage Facility on Route 1
 - Project was recently completed.
- Rolls Royce Expansion
 - 40,000 square foot expansion project recently completed.
- 1391 Main St. – Mixed use project
 - Mixed use project is being proposed at the current site of Leo’s Pizza
 - Proposed project would include 18 housing units and ground floor commercial space.
 - ZBA application approved. Planning Board is currently considering application.



- 10 Walpole Park South
 - 10,000 SF commercial addition permitted and in beginning stages of construction.
- Bank of America building 979 Main St.
 - 8 residential units and ground floor retail/restaurant has been approved for a mixed-use building.
 - Permits forthcoming.
- New Car Dealer Building on Rt 1 - Bid Cars facility
 - New 5000 SF building permitted and underway
- Jersey Mike's Subs to be built at 995 Old Post Road

Financial Foundation

The proposed Fiscal Year 2022 budget incorporates the latest information available to our finance team.

Revenue

The proposed FY2022 budget relies on revenue estimates based on the latest information we have available at this time. Despite the economic and financial uncertainty, the budget that is being presented this evening does not depend on the use of reserves or one-time revenues in the balancing process.

The overall General Fund budget increase is 4.5%. The primary source of revenue for Walpole is the property tax levy. The total amount anticipated to be raised from the tax levy for Fiscal Year 2022 is \$81,894,411 which utilizes the full limits of proposition 2 ½ and projects new growth at \$650,000.

In addition to the funds derived from Proposition 2½, local receipts make up just about \$6,301,500 of the FY 22 budget. Some of the major contributing factors to the total local receipts line include:

- Motor Vehicle Excise at \$3,900,000 which is level funded from the FY 21 projection
- License and Permit fees are budgeted at \$800,000 which is level with FY 21 projections.
- At this time we are projecting that the Town will at least meet this projection.



- Meals and hotels taxes are level funded from FY21 at 250,000 and \$150,000 respectively.
- Net metering credits is budgeted for \$340,000.

Just last week, Governor Baker filed his “House 1” General Appropriations Act proposal for Fiscal Year 2022. Governor Baker’s budget recommends a significant increase to local aid over what Walpole budgeted for Fiscal Year 2021, however this budget still has a long way to go through the legislative process before it becomes law. The state’s Fiscal Year 2021 budget for instance was revised in March and wasn’t signed into law until December. With local boards of health and public safety departments on the forefront of this pandemic, I can’t imagine the state making any drastic cuts to local aid, however if reductions are made by the legislature during deliberations this Spring this office will work with the Finance Committee to make the necessary changes that may be required.

Expenses

Each year the Finance team reviews each and every budget request that is submitted and requires department heads to justify each request. This year required more scrutiny than ever before. Each function within Town government was analyzed based on the needs and the costs associated with the department. The Fiscal Year 2022 budget was built around what is needed for the upcoming period, regardless of whether each department budget was higher or lower than the previous one.

The amount requested for appropriation for FY 22 totals \$100,108,257. Areas on the expense side of the budget that I would like to call your attention to include:

Public Works:

At the start of this year’s budget process DPW Director Mattson approached this office to present a labor-sharing proposal for the Parks and Highway Departments. Director Mattson proposed adding 2 new full-time employees to complement the staffing levels of the two departments, which are currently at 7 in Highway and 8 in Parks/Forestry. This concept, will allow for the Director and Superintendents to allocate the resources of these employees between the two departments as seasonal workloads dictate. The budget that is being presented funds both positions that have been requested.

In addition to the changes outlined above, Director Mattson is requesting a full time Engineering Inspector’s position which is proposed within this budget. This will allow for the Town Engineer to dedicate the time needed to review and comment on various ongoing and proposed projects throughout the town while affording us benefit of full time field inspection.



Public Works Department Heads and Superintendents have worked with Director Mattson and this office to make adjustments to multiple accounts to better reflect the needs of the operation. On a personal note I think it is important to recognize Director Mattson and Superintendents, Hand, Monta, Anderson, Perciaccante and Town Engineer Balduf for some of the innovative ideas that they have thought of such as job-sharing and interdepartmental training over the last few years. It is great to see department heads come up with new concepts that can be implemented.

Public Safety:

Despite the pandemic, Walpole continues to grow and our public safety departments are contending with an increase in calls for service, many are of a complex nature requiring multiple personnel.

The Fire Department finished 2020 with 7048 calls for service, of which 3625 were emergency responses. This represents an increase of 26% in emergency responses since 2012 (2843). The Walpole Fire Department Budget will increase by \$296,139 or just about 6%.

The pandemic created many challenges for the Fire Department and forced Chief Bailey to split the Fire fighters between 2 stations to provide for additional social distancing. As residents may expect this decision helped to provide improved response times in East Walpole and assist with the increased call volume for the Fire Department.

As I previously mentioned there are still several large projects on the horizon that will place additional demands on the needs of the department. The recommended budget for the Fire Department adds one new fire fighter to the department and a new day position for a full time Fire Prevention Officer. The new Fire Prevention Officer will be responsible for assisting the Deputy Chief with Fire Prevention-Plan review, inspections, permit review, scheduling, licensing, documentation, code enforcement, and compliance, customer inquiries, citizen compliments, and complaints, and conduct liquor establishment, school and preschool/daycare inspections to ensure code compliance and ensure that applicants receive their requested licenses. I know the Chief, Deputy Chief and the entire Fire Department are looking forward to finally filling this position. It has been a long time coming and it will go a long way in providing additional public safety coverage in Walpole.

On the Police side, over the last year alone, more than 22,000 incidents were reported and investigated by the department. A significant trend for police in 2020 includes over 600 incidents involving emotionally-disturbed persons or persons experiencing some form of mental health crisis. In addition to incidents, public safety dispatchers logged



over 40,000 calls for service, 25,000 computer aided dispatch entries, and fielded 5,855 emergency 911 calls.

The Walpole Police Department Budget will increase by \$400,538 or just about 7%. With over 25,000 residents, and 44 current officers, the Walpole Police Department has approximately 1.74 officers per thousand inhabitants. The majority of area communities maintain a range of 1.48 to 2.81 officers per thousand residents. I am pleased to report that the recommended budget fully funds the three new police officer positions. Two of these positions were partially funded for Fiscal Year 2021. Once these positions are filled Walpole will have 47 sworn officers.

I commend the Dispatchers, Police Officers and Fire Fighters for their daily efforts and protection especially given everything each and every one of them have dealt with since last March. Last Fall our public safety unions agreed to contractual changes that will seriously raise the caliber of professionalism and emergency response in the Town, such as administering and delivering Narcan and Epipen treatments to those who may need it. I want to recognize and thank all of the Walpole First Responders for their willingness to negotiate agreements that will have a positive and long lasting impact for many Walpole families and residents for years to come. Chief Bailey and Chief Carmichael have done an excellent job leading their departments throughout the pandemic. Walpole is fortunate to have dedicated Public Safety personnel that continue to do an excellent job keeping Walpole safe.

Finally, this past month I received the retirement notice from longtime Animal Control Officer of John Spillane. Given John's many years of service to the Town, this will not be an easy position to fill. In the spirit of regional collaboration, I am pleased to report that I am in the process of developing an arrangement with the Town of Norwood to enter into an Intermunicipal Agreement to share these services. Between Veterans Services and the new Energy Manager, Animal Control is another function of local government that I am pleased to share for efficient and effective service delivery to residents and taxpayers.

Public Education:

Public education continues to be one of Walpole's top priorities. This year the total public education line is recommended to be \$50,539,884

The Norfolk County Agricultural School has suggested a level-funded approach to their appropriation at this time; while the Tri-County Superintendent has advised that based on his enrollment projections Walpole will see a substantial increase to its assessment. I continue to grow concerned about the increasing demands that the Tri-County Regional



Vocational Tech School assesses on local resources, often with little input from its member communities. Last year Walpole's contribution increased by 24% and this year the contribution is set to increase by 35%. In addition to substantial increases to the yearly assessment, I expect that a multi-Town request for an override is the near future to address the Tri-County's High School facility based in Franklin. I urge Walpole's representatives on the Tri-County School Committee to explore how the district can ease back on the considerable increases over the last few years.

The Walpole School Committee recently voted on total budget request that totaled \$49,326,940 which is a 5.33% increase over the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriation. The recommended budget for the Walpole Public School Department stands at \$49,034,884 which is a 4.64% increase over FY 21. I am confident that we can work with the school officials bridge the \$322,056 gap in some way during the Spring.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize Superintendent Gough and School Business Manager Friscia for their innovative maneuvering leading up to the 2020-2021 School year. The Walpole Public Schools used one-time funds which totaled approximately \$736,000 from Fiscal Year 2021 to assist in the balancing act for this fiscal year which ensured that level services would continue for the students of the Walpole Public School system. I am optimistic that we will be able to reimburse all of these one-time funds in order to ensure that Walpole Public Schools will have funds available to bridge this one-time gap.

I anticipate that the health insurance figures and a few other budgets may come in favorably later on this Spring and I remain optimistic that School and Town officials will work together and review all options to bridge this gap in order to address the school department's needs.

Health & Human Services and Culture and Recreation:

The unprecedented public health crisis caused by Covid-19, in addition to the many other challenges that every resident faces, has required Town officials to develop new strategies and policies while navigating through uncharted territory. The Walpole Board of Health and their staff stepped up and immediately assumed a leadership role in Town Government. The Board of Health met on a weekly basis and assisted Board of Health Director Melissa Ranieri whenever necessary. I am pleased to report that with the Health Department's assistance, vaccines have been administered to the Town's first responders and will imminently start to be administered to approved phases(s) of the public. Beginning the week of February 8, the Health Department will be holding COVID-19 vaccine clinics twice each week at the new South Street Center for eligible Town residents. Online signups for these clinics are accessible on the Town website, and I



would encourage all residents to visit www.walpole-ma.gov for more information. Director Ranieri, Town Nurse Trish Fisher, Deputy Director Rike Sterrett and Clerk Jen Norton have certainly gone above and beyond over the last 11 months. I am proud of the efforts each and every member of the Walpole Board of Health has made since last March.

The pandemic caused every department to take a holistic approach and reevaluate ways to ensure that local services were delivered and core missions were carried through. At the onset of the pandemic for instance, amid confusion and uncertainty, the Food Pantry needed assistance ensuring that the food insecurity needs of the community were still being addressed. The Community Service Departments of the Town instantly stepped up, with the Council on Aging, Library, and the Recreation Department immediately transitioning into outreach and delivery mode, while the School Department instantly adapted their meal service program as well. When the Food Pantry came back to Walpole with a tremendous delivery from the Food Bank, the Department of Public Works formed an assembly line to breakdown the truck and sort the food. Despite the challenges, the pandemic revealed the hard work, spirit of public service, and the true colors among Walpole's many distinguished and dedicated employees.

Debt Service:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2022 debt budget provides for the payment of principal and interest costs for long and short term bonds issued by the Town for General Fund purposes. Walpole currently has a AA+ rating, one grade below the highest rating of AAA. The FY 22 Debt budget is \$4,187,900 which is just about level funded with the Fiscal Year 2021 budget.

Our debt level is moderate and manageable. We continue to work with Hilltop Securities, our financial advisor to ensure that the Town is maximizing the market when it comes to interest rates and borrowing. The Town has recently been able to realize significant savings for our taxpayers when the Town's financial team decided last year to wait to borrow long-term on the Town's field's project. Instead of locking up a long-term rate in an uncertain market the finance Team decided to issue a Bond Anticipation Note for one year and go out to the bond market in 2021 to lock up a much reduced long term rate for the South Walpole Community Athletic Complex. This decision has certainly paid off because interest rates have declined since last year. This decision is going to have positive long term impacts on Walpole's debt plan for years to come and assist with the Town's long term goals which include improving the infrastructure of the Town without the need for debt exclusions (except large scale school projects) while maintaining a reasonable debt level.



Assessment and Fringe Benefits:

The Assessment and Fringe Benefits portion of the budget which consists of the Other Post-Employment Benefits, Retirement Assessment, Unemployment and Insurance is budgeted at a 4% increase at this time. I expect this line will see some changes over the next few months once the Town's health insurance carrier finalizes their FY 22 projections.

The budgeted OPEB contribution has increased by \$100,000 in FY 22. This recommendation maintains our ongoing commitment to funding the Town's OPEB liability. Since 2014 the Town has increased the OPEB account from \$1,072,538 to \$5,564,124. The Town's recent actuarial study estimated Walpole's Unfunded Actuarial Accrued Liability is just over \$46.5 million

Reserves

We continue to add to our financial reserves and maintain a solid AA+ bond rating for the Town. The resources in the Town's reserves include Free Cash, the Stabilization Fund, OPEB and the Finance Committee's reserve fund.

The Fiscal Year 2022 budget maintains \$460,000 in the reserve fund. This account which, falls under the jurisdiction of both the Select Board and Finance Committee will allow Town officials to address unforeseen and extraordinary shortfalls if necessary.

Undesignated fund balance, informally known as "Free Cash," was certified at \$5,773,783. The Fall Town Meeting appropriated \$4,860,926 for a variety of items. The following list breaks down the identified uses of free cash:

- Fall Town Meeting Capital Appropriations \$1,292,192
- School Appropriations \$318,734
- Fall 2020 Stabilization Appropriation \$3,000,000
- Fall 2020 OPEB Appropriation \$250,000

\$912,857 of the certified Free Cash funds was not appropriated last Fall. The Finance Committee wisely made this recommendation in order to allow the Town to address any potential shortfall that may need to be addressed at the Spring 2021 Town Meeting.



Since 2014 the Town's Stabilization Fund has grown from \$1,827,245 to \$8,328,795. Since becoming the Town Administrator, I have striven to achieve 10% of the Town's operating budget in the Stabilization Fund to ensure that the Town maintains a high bond rating and receives competitive interest in the bond rating market.

The pandemic has undoubtedly created some unforeseen and long lasting problems that we may not be aware of at this time. The funds set aside in the various reserve accounts will provide much needed flexibility. Over the next 2-3 budget cycles the Town may need to access these reserves in order to bridge potential budget gaps that may be created as a result of COVID. I am confident that the reserves at the Town's disposal will allow us to preserve Walpole's long term financial stability.

Capital Investments/Infrastructure

The Capital Budget requests last Fall exceeded \$5.6 million and Town Meeting voted to fund more than \$3 million in requests. I commend the Capital Budget Committee for their efforts overseeing the Capital Budget requests and the Town's long term capital planning process. Some of the major items that received funding included:

- \$1,100,000 in Sewer and Water Improvement Projects and equipment, such as a rehab to the Edward J. Delaney Water Treatment Plant and Sewer Pump Station Rehabilitation
- \$90,000 towards funding for a traffic study and improvements to help alleviate the traffic congestion in the Central Business District.
- \$90,000 for Design and Engineering to help address the intersection at Washington Street and Polly Lane.
- \$145,000 in funding for School Department Equipment, such as projectors and computers.
- \$189,000 for building infrastructure projects at Town Hall, Blackburn Hall, and the East Walpole Fire Station
- \$413,000 for Equipment replacement and infrastructure improvements for the Department of Public Works
- \$1,514,000 for Street & Drainage Improvements, including continuing the Town's recent commitment to resurfacing and upgrading sidewalks

Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds

The recommended Water Enterprise Fund budget is \$5,746,676. The current Water Retained earnings balance was certified by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue in August 2020 at \$2,296,609. The recommended Sewer Enterprise budget is



\$5,312,764. The current Sewer Retained earnings balance was certified by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue in August 2020 at \$2,170,644.

Spring Town Meeting Warrant

At this time there are currently 20 Articles that are set to be considered. Some articles of note include:

- The Fiscal Year 2021 in year budget adjustment
- The Fiscal Year 2022 Budget
- The Fiscal Year 2022 Sewer and Water Budgets
- An article to address any snow and ice deficit that may be encountered.
- An article to address the Stabilization Fund if necessary
- An article to address the OEPB Fund if necessary
- An article that funds Walpole Media Corp in Fiscal Year 2022.
- Multiple citizen's petition articles

A detailed description of the proposed warrant articles will be available on the Town's website soon.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I leave you with this, it would have been impossible to get through 2020 without the support of so many great people who have stepped up and helped out when it was needed. If I had to go through a global pandemic, I am honored to go through it serving as the Town Administrator in Walpole.

2021 is going to be a challenging year as we grapple with the financial and socio-economic impacts of the Coronavirus and we work to vaccinate our essential workers, vulnerable populations and ultimately the general population. The emotional, economic and financial toll this disease has taken on our community will continue into the foreseeable future. We have all seen the good, the bad and the ugly over the last 11 months. We have also seen the strong, the resilient and the compassionate - workers and volunteers who have tirelessly continued to provide critical programs, goods and services during the pandemic.

Over the next few months leading up to Town meeting I look forward to working with Town officials, residents, and business leaders for inspiration, ideas, advice and resources as to how we can approach the challenges ahead of us.

The Fiscal Year 2022 budget is balanced and ready for the Finance Committee's review. The preparation of this budget would not be possible without the hard work of our



outstanding Finance Team, Jodi Cuneo, Dennis Flis, Lisa Sinkus, Patrick Shield and the cooperation of all the department heads and employees. The preparation and work done to complete this budget is a TEAM effort. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Select Board, Finance Committee and the residents of Walpole for their continued confidence and support.